1. National Crop Forecasting Centre will be immediately set up under the Ministry of Agriculture which would make full use of satellite based remote sensing capabilities of the Department of Space and the computer network set up by the National Informatics Centre covering all the districts, for making forecasts relating to various agricultural crops and disseminating information thereof.

2 The Essential Commodities Act would be immediately reviewed with a view to examine as to how the State Government/ UT Administrations can be empowered for effective action against those who board and cause artificial shortage and engage in trade mal-practices not only in respect of foodgrains but also in items of mass consumption like vegetables, edible oils etc. Group of officials under the Cabinet Secretary would be constituted to make suitable recommendations both on the amendment of the Act and the steps that should be taken to improve the enforcement mechanism. Representatives of some of the States would be included in this Group.

3. The States/UTs would take advantage whenever warranted, of the powers already delegated to them under the Essential Commodities Act, 1935 to take effective action for curbing of mal-practices relating to essential commodities.

4. The Cabinet Committee on Prices (CCP) set up within the Union Government would be restructured to make it more functional and enable it to carry out monthly reviews on prices and ensure timely corrective action. The State Governments would also similarly consider setting up similer committees in their respective States.

5. Social Cell would be set up under the Cabinet Secretariat to monitor and analyse price date and trends of essential commodities. It would also service the Cabinet Committee on Prices which would take decisions on imports and exports of essential commodities. The cell will establish mechanism for obtaining crop price and production data from various centres in the country and share these information suitably with the States.

6. A Joint Monitoring Mechanism for prices and production will be established under the Chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary which will hold quarterly meetings with the Chief Secretaries of States/UTs.

7. The States/UTs will initiate urgent steps to implement a programme for establishment of efficient and cost effective cold storages to minimise high percentage of waste as well as programmes relating to development of food processing industries. Finance Ministry will examine the possibility of providing soft loan to the States/UTs from the banking system for improving these facilities.

8. In the event of obnormal increase in the prices of any perishable essential commodities. State Govemments/UT Administrations would undertake market intervention operations for distribution of these commodities at reasonable prices till the situation reverts to normally. To facilitate such market interventions, Central Government will provide necessary funds on matching basis. For distribution of such commodities, States/UTs will use the existing mechanism of PDS.

9. Having regard to the fiscal deficit of the Union Government as well as those of the States/UTs. Concerted afforts will be made by both the Central Government and the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations to augment revenues, realise user charges fully and curb unproductive expenditures.

10. The items included by the Central and State Governments under PDS will be reviewed from time to time.

11. States/UTs will take immediate action to remove restrictions including informal restrictions, if any, on the movement of essential commodities so that free flow of essential commodities in ensured.

सरसो के तेल कि बरामदगी

661. **श्री रामजीलाल**: क्या खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मामले मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे किः

(क) दिल्ली में ड्राप्सी कांड से संबंधित कितने मामले दर्ज किये गये तथा कितना माल बरामद किया गया;

(ख) बरामद किये गये माल का ब्यौरा क्या है और उस माल का क्या हुआ;

(ग) क्या यह भी सच है कि ड्राप्सी कांड के बाद सरसों के तेल की अत्वाधिक कमी हो गयी है तथा खाने के तेल की कीमते काफी बढ़ गई है; और

(घ) यदि हां, तो सरकार ने इस समस्या के समाधान के लिए क्या कदम उठाये है?

खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मामलों के मंत्रलयों में राज्य मंत्री (श्री सत्यपाल सिंह यादव) : (क) और (ख) दिल्ली एवं अन्य राज्यों के अस्पतालों में ड्राप्सी से भर्ती होने वाले मामलों की कुल संख्या निम्न प्रकार से है—

दिल्ली	2556
अन्य राज्य/संघ शासित क्षेत्र	436
कुल	2992

जब्त किए गए गए स्टाक की मात्रा और उसको प्रयोग में लाये जाने के तरीके के बारे में सूचना अभी उपलब्ध नहीं है।

(ग) ड्राप्सी की घटना के बाद बाजार में सरसों के तेल, विशेषकर खुले सरसों के तेल की कमी हो गई थी। ड्राप्सी की घटना के बाद खाद्य तेलों की कीमतों में कुछ वृद्धि हुई थी तथा इससे गुणवत्ता की जांच सख्ती से की गई। फिर भी, कीमतों में पिछले एक माह में सराहनीय कमी आई है, जो निम्नवत है:—

मुंगफली का तेल	-5.6 प्रतिशत
सरसों का तेल	-12.6 प्रतिशत
पामोलीन का तेल	-6.2 प्रतिशत
सुरजमुखी का तेल	-7.0 प्रतिशत
सोयाबिन का तेल	-6.8 प्रतिशत
नारियल का तेल	-5.4 प्रतिशत
तिल का तेल	-2.1 प्रतिशत

(घ) इस समस्या से निपटने के लिए सरकार द्वारा कुछ कदम उठाए गए है, जो निम्न प्रकार से है:—

(1) गुणवत्ता जांच के पश्चात ही बाजार में सुरक्षित खाद्य तेल उपलब्ध कराना।

(2) खाद्य तेलों के लिए सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली को सुदृढ़ बनाना।

(3) ओपन- जनरल लाइसेंस (ओ.पी.एल) से खाद्य तेलों के आयात की सरकार की निति को जारी रखना।

(4) खाद्य तेलों में 25 प्रतिशत से 15 प्रतिशत तक आयात शुल्क में कमी करना।

(5) उपभोक्ताओं आदि को सुरक्षित खाद्य तेल की बिक्री सुनिश्चित करने के लिए खाद्य तेल पैकेजिग (नियमन) आदेश, 1998 को लागू करना।

Financial Crisis in Sugar Industry

662. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister for FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the serious financial crisis in the sugar industry in the country, threatening closure of various sugar mills;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons identified by Government for the prevailing situation in the sugar industry; and

(d) what remedial measures are contemplated by Government to meet the situation and to protect the industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) to (c) So far, there are no reports of serious financial crisis in the sugar industry of the country threatening closure of sugar mills. However, the two apex bodies of Sugar Mills namely the Indian Sugar Mills Association and the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories have represented to the Government that there has been a large inflow of imported sugar and a steep fall in international prices of sugar, and demanding an increase in the import duty on sugar to 40% from the present 5%. Some Sugar Mills have also reported that they are not able to sell their allotted quantities of freesale sugar due to over supply of sugar in the open market.

(d) Following measures have been/are being taken by the Government to help the sugar industry.

(i) In order to enable the sugar factories to sell their allocated quantity of freesale sugar, they are being granted extension in the validity periods of their release orders.

(ii) The matter of incease in the import duty on sugar is under consideration of the Government.